



Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

STEPS

The STEPS team work with children, young people, their carers and families to help them sort through their feelings at complex times in their lives. The team are aware that it can be difficult for children and young people to talk about things so they work with them through various activities such as play, art and even music.

On my visits to STEPS I was made to feel very welcome by Yvonne and Ingrid who also provided me with lots of information about the service.

To help me write this evaluation I had the pleasure of meeting with Connie, Sarah, Amy, Beth and Hailey.

Evidence of Dialogue and Change

Beth explained to me about the STEPS service. She said, **“Everything here is confidential, so you can tell anything you feel. When you first arrive you go to the office and get a drink and a biscuit, then you come straight in here.”** Amy agreed, **“Yeah you never have to wait.”**

Reviews

Every once in a while the young people have meetings with their STEPS worker, social worker and their family or carer to review their experiences. These meetings provide the opportunity for everyone to consider what support and help can be offered and for the young person to raise any issues or concern they may have. Amy said, **“We do have reviews and I am given the choice of going or not.”** Beth added, **“If we don’t want to go we always get told what was said.”**

Questionnaire/Evaluations

These have been developed with young people in order to assess how useful the young people have found the service and what changes could be made to improve the service. Beth, Hailey and Amy all told me how they have completed different questionnaires. Amy said, **“I have filled in different forms. The last one was all about what I thought of STEPS. It was easy to fill in. You just had to tick a picture that related to how you feel about something. But there’s another one with more writing on it.”** Hailey agreed the questionnaires are easy to fill in.

Amy explained how the questionnaires helped her to bring about changes to the service. **“One of the questions asked if my journeys to STEPS were ok. I said no, cos some weeks the transport just didn’t turn up for me. So I missed quite a few weeks. It was meant to be a volunteer driver. It all got sorted in the end though.”** Yvonne said the STEPS team immediately responded to Amy’s concerns. The problem was taken up at management level, a letter of apology was sent to Amy and Yvonne arranged home visits.

Children and Young People's Views

Beth said, **“When I first came here they asked me to fill in a piece of paper about my life at home, so they could find out about me. The next week we played a game, so I could find out more about Stella.”** Amy added, **“We tell the workers which room we want to meet in, either the art room or the play room or this room. Anything else I want changing, I just tell my STEPS worker.”** Beth continued, **“When I come, they ask if I think anything needs to be changed.”**

At this point Amy talked about some changes she would like to see. She said, **“The ceiling in the play room doesn't look very nice. I have told Yvonne and she agreed something needs to be done. The building could be better. Everything just looks like a school. The corridors and rooms, there should be curtains up at all the windows and better colours on the walls.”** The young people agreed that they would like a say in how the STEPS building is decorated and had lots of good ideas. It will be interesting to see how the team continue and develop dialogue with children and young people to ensure their wants and needs are met. Perhaps any changes here could be used as examples of evidence for the next reevaluation.

Connie and Sarah told me that their STEPS worker meets with them at their school. Connie said, **“Linda comes to our school, we've been meeting since 2006. On Halloween.”** She continued, **“We met in the parent's room. It's a small room and there are toys.”** Sarah added, **“We get to say where we meet. And say it was an Art lesson, and I really really like Art, I would just tell Linda and we would change the day and time we meet.”**

I would like to thank everyone who helped me to write this evaluation. The STEPS team are committed to the principle of dialogue with children and young people. Undoubtedly STEPS service is built on mutual respect and the belief that children and young people have the right to be heard, listened to and believed.

My conversations with the young people involved with STEPS revealed a satisfaction with the way they are able to express their views and influence change. There are formal opportunities available including questionnaires and reviews but young people told me that they are happy to informally talk to their worker.

I would also like to suggest that for future evaluations a separate Investing in Children file is kept to record evidence of dialogue with young people and particularly the outcomes and changes that have taken place.

When I asked the young people if they agreed that STEPS should get Investing in Children membership they all said yes! As the children all agreed with the report, I have no hesitation in recommending that STEPS once again receives Investing in Children Membership.

**Glenys Newby
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